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Editorials

The Riddle: Why Spy?

SOMETIME in 1959, an indictment returned in Washington this week indicates Soviet embassy representatives approached Lt. Col. William Henry Whalen, an aide privy to the highest level secrets of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In 1961, the Czech embassy began making overtures to Frank J. Mrkva, a State Department passport office employe whose duties included taking passports around to various embassies for visas.

Both Communist embassies wanted the same thing: They wanted the Americans to spy for them.

WHALEN, according to the indictment, did so. He is charged with passing to two Russian officials (both of whom have since left the country) information about atomic weapons, missiles, and retaliation plans of the Strategic Air Command.

Mrkva reported the Czechs to his superiors, who in turn called in the FBI. They told him to play along, and he did, until one of his two Czech contacts gave him an electronic eavesdropping device to place in the office of the State Department's Director of Eastern European Affairs.

For his alleged efforts in behalf of the Soviets, Whalen was paid \$5,500 in six instalments. If convicted of the charges for which he stands indicted, he may be sentenced to death.

Mrkva, son of a Czech immigrant couple whose land was seized by the Communists, was paid \$3,440, in amounts from \$100 to \$500, which he turned over to the FBI. When the State Department disclosed his activities

Wednesday, it also announced he was receiving an honor award and a spot promotion which will increase his salary from \$9,267 to \$10,987 a year.

Neither the FBI nor the Defense Department has explained why Whalen's case took five years to make. The indictment charges he turned over the secret data to the Russians between December, 1959, and March, 1961, when he was retired from the service with a heart condition.

Nor did the State Department say, but it seems clear, that Mrkva's activities, although more recent, were disclosed when they were to counteract the blow to confidence in U.S. security controls which the Whalen indictment surely inflicted.

Nor have Whalen's motives been made public, although it may well be that money was his objective. He received wide publicity in Washington in 1958 while trying to sell for \$5,000 a white ivory tiger which he obtained in Japan. Speculation is that this tipped the Russians he needed money. But this is only speculation.

But Whalen's motive is important. Counterintelligence to prevent the recruiting and operations of spies against their own country can be more effective where areas of motivation can be pinpointed and scrutinized concerning those with access to security material.

Allen Dulles, the former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, in his book, "The Craft of Intelligence," says there are four kinds of spies against their own country—the ideological, the conspirator, the venal and the trapped.

Col. Oleg Penkovskiy, the Soviet most noted Communist to have

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turned against his own country for espionage purposes, wrote in his journal that few who spied against the West were ideological spies; most did it for money, from being blackmailed, or for the love of conspiracy.

Penkovskiy himself would have us believe he spied against Russia because of ideological distaste for Communism. Yet through his writings runs a current of a fifth motive not listed by Allen Dulles—bitterness over too-slow promotion.

REAL-TIME SPY cases involving American betrayers are mercifully few. But in each the very existence of a motive has been among the most credence-defying aspects—as those who still doubt the guilt of Alger Hiss continue to remind us.

So whatever the reason Colonel Whalen betrayed his country—if he is found guilty—we may hope his trial will tell us why he became a spy rather than becoming a double agent like Frank Mrkva.

The average citizen can understand Frank Mrkva. But he is so shocked by the idea of espionage against his own country that he has no answer to the riddle of "Why spy?" as it pertains to Colonel Whalen. And by the same token, he has little idea of the necessity for countermeasures which may go against the grain of traditional American freedoms but which the Whalen case, before it is over, may demand if those freedoms are to remain secure for the whole people.